

Malfoozaat on Ilm, Ulama, Madaaris

Of Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi rahmatullahi alayh

ABANDON YOUR STATUS AS AN AALIM IF YOU ARE A CONFORMIST

O Ulama! Look into your heart and do some soul searching. You are the Representatives of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Reflect! If the masses had to oppose Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), would he conform to their opinion to appease them? You too, as his Representatives act accordingly. If you are unable to, then abandon the duty of the Representatives of the Rasool (sallallahu alayhi wasallam).

WITHOUT MA'RIFAT, AN AALIM WILL BE MANIPULATED AT WILL BY SHAYTAAN

Fiqh would not be defined as the mere superficial perusing of kitaabs. Fiqh is a celestial light (noor) which subsists in the heart. It is the blessing of this that the holder thereof gains an understanding of the Deen. It is this very noor which Allah Ta'ala sometimes snatches away. This is something which is not in the control of man. Now, you can read and study thousands of kitaabs, but because you have no understanding of the Deen, you will never become a Faqeeh.

This noor of fiqh increases with obedience and wanes with sin. That 'Faqeeh' who is not obedient or pious, is a Faqeeh of the kitaabs (and not of the Deen). He is not a haqeeqi (real) Faqeeh and is not included in the class of fuqaha regarding whom Nabi (sallahu alayhi wa sallam) gave glad tidings.

And since we are aware that fiqh is the understanding of the Deen, what doubt can there now be that a Faqeeh is also a soofi. All our Fuqaha, as many as they were, were all Sahib-e-Nisbat and Sahib-e-Ma'rifat (i.e. Walis who followed the Path of Tareeqat). The proper and total understanding of the Deen cannot be acquired without nisbat and ma'rifat. This is the reason why it has been mentioned regarding the Fuqaha, "One Faqeeh is harder on shaitaan than a thousand 'aabids." The person who understands the Deen well, will be privy to the deceptions and ploys of shaitaan. He will not allow a single trick to entrap him. As for the unlearned 'aabid, shaitaan can manoeuvre and manipulate him as he pleases."

THE EVIL OF AN AALIM WHO DOES NOT PRACTISE UPON HIS KNOWLEDGE

It appears in the Hadith that on the Day of Qiyaamah a man will be seen circling his entrails which will be outside his body. People will enquire about his fate. Why he is being punished in this way? He will reply: "I did not practise in accordance with my knowledge." Of what benefit and pride can be such a knowledge which will be Allah's evidence against a man?

Have you not heard that the Hadith says that for the ignoramus (jaahil) there is one 'Wail' and for the non-practising Aalim there are ten 'Wails'. (Wail is a terrible section in the dregs of

Jahannum). Is there some other creation who has to act according to the knowledge of the Deen? Are these teachings not for us to follow?

Although all Ulama are not in this class (of non-practising Aalims), nevertheless, even one such Aalim is a blot and a cause of complaint. The ruin which ensues is not restricted to the one non-practising Aalim. Others too are influenced by this one non-practising Aalim. The damage caused by the non-practising Aalim is twofold. one: Observing his actions, laymen gain audacity and perpetrate evil. Two: People lose confidence in all Ulama as the a result of his misdeeds.

NOOR OF KNOWLEDGE IS UNATTAINABLE WITHOUT TAQWA AND AMAL

What are the adverse affects on ta'leem if the Talaba (students of knowledge) perform Ishraaq, Chaasht (Duhaa) and Tahajjud Salaat? And, if instead of becoming involved in futile talks, the Students of Hadith engage their tongues in Thikr and Durood Shareef, what negative affect will there be on their studies? (If they engage in these acts), then Insha'Allah, the Noor of Ibaadat and the sweetness of Thikr will develop in the Students.

Fahm-e-Saleem (correct understanding) and the Noor of intelligence cannot be acquired without Taqwa and Amal. Adherence to this is highly beneficial for studies. While students should be prevented from participation in the special ways of Sulook, they should diligently observe the Athkaar (plural of Thikr) which are narrated in the Ahaadith, and without fail be regular and punctual with Tilaawat of the Qur'aan Majeed. These are such acts which may not be discarded in any way."

NAFL SALAAT IS EXCEEDINGLY IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY FOR THE ULAMA

People in general regard Nafl as superfluous, and so do the Ahl-e-Ilm (People of Knowledge) in particular. The People of Knowledge are more trapped in this misconception. From the very beginning the students are taught that while there is thawaab for Nafl, there is no sin in abstaining. In view of this definition, the students labour under the impression that there is nothing wrong if Nawaafil is discarded. A more ruinous idea is that Nafl is not an act of importance.

Thus, they dismiss Nawaafil as if the Shariat's exhortation to perform Nafl is futile. Nafl is never futile or unimportant. It is complimentary of Faraaidh compulsory acts of ibaadat. It perfects Fardh (by compensating for the deficiencies in the way of discharge). From this angle, Nafl is exceedingly important. Furthermore, Nafl is a salient sign of Divine Love.

IMPERATIVE DEPENDENCE ON THE FUQAHA

I never repose confidence in my own understanding until I have not seen the juziyaat (specific rules and examples) of the Fuqaha. (This was generally the attitude of all seniors. This is a lesson for the junior muftis of this age who have fled from the sanctuary of caution to fish in the kutub of Hadith in blind endeavours to extract basis for developing issues. The imperative need is to search for a basis in the kutub of the Fuqaha—Mujlisul Ulama)

THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FUQAHAA AND US

The Faqeeh also explains his proofs and codes of law with regard to his research, but the example of these proofs are like the eyes. His walking is not dependant on a walking-stick. Allaah Ta'ala has blessed the Fuqahaa with 'eyes', which are the instrument of Ijtihad. They are not in need of the walking-sticks, but we are. Our example is like that of the blind person, whose entire trust and reliance is on the stick. If he walks without the stick, then he will fall into a ditch.

ADOPT THE WAY AND SPIRIT OF THE PIOUS PREDECESSORS

Whoever has adopted the ways of the Salf-e-Saaliheen (the Pious Predecessors) and followed their Path, he has been successful. Whoever diverged from their way, fell into the pit of disgrace. (Hadhrat Junaid Baghdaadi –rahmatullah alayh– said: 'Whoever searches for honour by means of baatil, Allah will impose on him disgrace via the Haqq.' All the ways and methods of liberalism in emulation of the kuffaar adopted by the men of learning in this age culminate in failure and disgrace in both worlds.—Mujlisul Ulama)

FOLLOWING THE ULAMA-E-HAQQ IS ESSENTIAL

Following the Ulama is essential. Opposition to the Ulama is tantamount to opposing Allah and His Rasool. Nowadays, affairs (of importance) are entrusted to unqualified people merely on account of their worldly status. The Ulama are not thirsty and the wealthy ones are not the wells. The reality is the other way around.

In all actions of life, ittiba' (obedience) to the Shariah is essential. The Ulama are the ones who are aware of the Ahkaam of the Shariah. Thus, by following them, one follows the Deen. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) called to the Path of Allah Ta'ala, and this is also the attitude (and obligation) of the Ulama (since they are his representatives).

(In the present age there is a glut of deviate scholars whose objective is money, name and fame. One should therefore first examine the lifestyle of a scholar before following him. Not every scholar is an Aalim of the Deen.).

SUHBAT OF THE AHLULLAH AN INCUMBENT NEED OF THE TIMES

(Suhbat is companionship of the Auliya – to be in the company of the pious.) Alas! Nowadays people are oblivious of essential things. They dwell in ghaflat (oblivion). The suhbat of the Ahlullah is an incumbent need of the times. According to me, this suhbat in this age is Fardh-e-Ain. The present time is extremely dangerous (for Imaan and Akhlaaq). Experience has established that this suhbat is the medium for the safety of Imaan. There is, therefore, no doubt in it being Fardh-e-Ain.

However, people are completely oblivious of this imperative need. One of the effects of the lack of suhbat at this time is the total lack of respect. Students mock their ustaadhs. The Qur'aan and the Hadith are misinterpreted. The limit of excellence today is the ability to deliver lectures and to write. People consider themselves as the equals of their ustaadhs and their buzrugs. So

far, they are not verbally proclaiming this attitude. However, in the future such claims will be overtly proclaimed. (Hadrath Thanvi made these observations 75 years ago. Today students of the Deen are flagrantly disrespecting their ustadhs, slandering them, mocking and belittling them. In fact, they openly challenge their ustadhs and think of themselves as being superior to their ustadhs. They stand up as adversaries to their ustadhs.)

There is no honour left in people. Their thinking has become corrupt, hence in their minds, the ustadh is insignificant; the sheikh is nothing and even the father is of no value for them. There is no longer moderation. Neither principles nor rules remain to regulate the lives of people. There is therefore a dire need for an expert guide to oversee on. People have started to oppose their buzrugs in words, deeds, appearance, lifestyle, dress and character. There has been a sudden inversion of values. Thus, the Deeni Madaaris of the present time (i.e. 75 years ago) appear like Aligarh University (secular universities). Concepts have changed; dress and appearance have changed. The decline has reached such a low ebb that the jamaat (group) which is related to the Masha-ikh has become corrupt and polluted.

PREVALENT IGNORANCE OF THE PATH AND TRUE OBJECTIVES

Nowadays, a man completes the study of all the kutub (Deeni kitaabs) and even becomes a mudarris (teacher in a Darul Uloom), but he is ignorant of the Path (Tasawwuf). People are involved in paraphernalia (zawaaid). They have abandoned the Maqaasid (true objectives).

(The Maqсад of Tasawwuf is the acquisition of Allah's pleasure. This is attainable only by way of moral reformation –Islahe- Nafs. Acts such as advertised public halqah thikr and other public displays of non-Masnoon acts of 'worship' are among the paraphernalia which are not the objectives of Sulook. – Mujlisul Ulama).

SEEK ONLY THE COMPANY OF AN AALIM WHO FOLLOWS THE SUNNAH PERFECTLY

It is imperative to refrain from the Aalim who misleads people with baseless fatwas issued for the sake of nafsaani motives. He is like a fraudulent physician. He is false and a robber. on the other hand, if the non-practising Aalim presents the truth, listen to him and act according to his rulings, but refrain from his company.

Sit in the company of only a practising Aalim who follows the Sunnah perfectly so that you gain enthusiasm for the Aakhirah and for practising righteousness.

THE GREATER THE MUHAQQIQ THE MORE THE CRITICISM

(A Muhaqqiq is an Aalim of the Haq who is grounded in knowledge and taqwa.) The greater a Muhaqqiq, the more will he be criticized. The reason for this is the profoundness of his knowledge and intellectual grasp. Others are unable to understand the profundity of his investigative research. His statements appear to be in apparent conflict with what the masses believe, hence even verdicts of kufr are doled out against him.

However, they were truly wonderful men. In their short life they prepared volumes of such books which are not normally possible. Added to their works of knowledge, is the abundance of their ibaadat. They would perform hundreds of raka'ts daily and engage in abundance of Tilaawat. Hadhrat Haaji Imdaadullah (rahmatullah alayh) said that when a man develops a compatibility with the realm of souls (Aalam-e-Arwaah), then he is not much restricted by time and space. There is barkat in his time and work. The illustrious seniors among the Mutaqaddimeen were such men. The determinant in this barkat is primarily Taqwa.

SPEAK THE HAQQ WITH CLARITY

A leader of Islam (an Alim of the Haqq) should state with clarity every issue of the Shariat as Imaam Ahmad Bin Hambal (rahmatullah alayh) did on the question of Khalq-e-Qur'aan (Is the Qur'aan created or uncreated?). He proclaimed the truth with clarity (and was severely lashed by the order of the king). One who is not of such calibre should not engage in such debates. There is no need for it. If the audience is intelligent and unbiased, the question should be correctly stated with clarity. If the debate will be acrimonious, maintain silence.

BE CONCERNED WITH ONLY THE PLEASURE OF ALLAH

A searcher of the Truth is not concerned with the displeasure of people. While one should not intentionally make enemies, one should not be concerned with their displeasure (on matters of the Haqq). Allah is the Helper. Focus the gaze on Him, and please Him. In fact, sometimes the displeasure of people saves one from many calamities.

MASS NEGLECT OF AMR BIL MA'ROOF EVEN BY THE ULAMA

It is observed nowadays that people do not want to make Amr Bil Ma'roof – command righteousness. Leave alone the general public even the Ulama are not interested in this. Then there are two groups of Ulama; one is the group who are not Mashaaikh. We won't say anything about them because the public does not view them with much esteem. Those who are 'mashaaikh', leaders of the times and people hold them in esteem, the most neglect is shown by them. For them merely taking a Tasbeeh and sitting is sufficient to reach Jannat. They are not interested in correcting anyone. In fact, they consider it to be the antithesis of being a Khalifah. If a Khalifah starts telling people what is right and what is wrong he is expelled from the list of Buzrugs and considered a mere Molvi.

THE DECEPTION OF MAKING 'PEACE' WITH EVERYONE

It is lamentable to see that nowadays the meaning of being a Buzrug is considered to be that one should not say anything to anyone; one should make peace with everyone. They consider this to be saintliness. One should not hurt anyone; one should not trouble anyone. So one should not make Amr Bil Ma'roof!!!

If this is the case then one should not tell a haughty person anything. One should not hurt his feelings and one should let everyone do as they please. General permission should be granted for everyone to do as they please. Then open zina should be tolerated, robbery, murder; everything should be condoned!

If you say that in robbery and murder people are hurt therefore these are prohibited according to the precept of not hurting anyone, then it can be argued that zina doesn't hurt anyone. And if it is contended that the husband or father is hurt, then where a woman does not have a father or any family member and she voluntarily submits to this vile act then who is hurt in this case?

In fact, the meaning of not hurting anyone is to wilfully hurt someone. And when someone wishes to correct a wrong or disease as a result of which the other party is hurt, such as a surgeon performing an operation to remove an infected tissue or dentist extracting a rotten tooth or father disciplining a delinquent child then these are not considered hurting others.

If not hurting anyone is accepted universally then why restrict it to those who are present. What about hurting the feelings and heart of people in absentia? Just as 'hurting' is given such a wide meaning, give the afflicted person a general application. And when taking a broad meaning for the aggrieved persons then there isn't a sin which does not hurt someone or the other.

WITH DUE ADAB, EVEN SENIORS SHOULD BE CORRECTED

Once, I really appreciated something from a friend of mine who happens to be my student as well. I was in the Masjid. I exchange a note with someone for small change. This friend immediately said: "This is a bai' (monetary transaction) which is forbidden in the Masjid." This is the way of the Ahl-e-Haq. They caution their elders as well, but with due respect.

ZEAL AND FURY FOR THE RIGHT REASONS ARE ESSENTIAL

Hidda (zeal) is one thing and shidda (fury) another. Zeal is a component of iman. A mu'min is extremely zealous. For example, a person will become angry if someone interferes with his wife. If another observes this and says that this person is short-tempered, he will be told: O idiot! To keep quiet on such an occasion is shameless! In the same way, a religious person (or pious person) cannot stand anything contrary to the din.

ANGER REQUIRED WHEN THE HAQ IS TRAMPLED UPON

When the Haq was trampled upon then the anger of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was unstoppable until he restored the Haq to its position of dominance. He would, however, neither become angry out of self-interest and nor would he avenge on account of a personal matter.

HARSHNESS FOR THE SAKE OF DEEN IS NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH LOFTY CHARACTER

People have the wrong conception of harshness. If obedience to the Law is commanded with sternness, it will not be harshness. All the rules of Salaat are easy. However, harsh warnings have been sounded for non-observance. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) had also instructed the hudood (the punishments of stoning and cutting off the hands). Despite such severity, the Qur'aan describing the character of Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) says: "Verily, you (O Muhammad!) are on a wonderful moral character."

A DESIRABLE DISUNITY

When disunity is harmful for the Deen it is evil. If the disunity is beneficial for the Deen, it will not be evil notwithstanding it being harmful for the dunya. Hadhrat Ibraaheem (alayhis salaam) had chosen a disunity about which the Qur'aan says: "Verily, in Ibraaheem and those with him there is for you a beautiful character (code of life), when they said to their people: 'We dissociate from you and from that which you worship besides Allah. 7 We reject you. Animosity and hatred have become manifest between us and you forever (and it will remain so) until you believe in Allah Alone.'" (Qur'aan) Can anyone condemn this disunity? Mentioning a reprehensible unity, Ibraaheem (alayhis salaam) said: "Verily, you have taken besides Allah idols as objects of mutual love among you in this worldly life. On the Day of Qiyaamah there will be mutual rejection among you. Some of you will curse others among yourselves, and for you will be the Fire." (Qur'aan) From this aayat it is quite clear that in opposition to Hadhrat Ibraaheem (alayhis salaam), the kuffaar had displayed a perfect unity. But this unity was never praiseworthy. In fact, Hadhrat Ibraaheem (alayhis salaam) had eradicated the very foundations of this unity. This unity was in opposition to the Haqq. Therefore, understand well that unity is the objective and desirable only when it is beneficial for the Deen, and disunity is abhorrent only if it is harmful for the Deen. If unity is detrimental for the Deen and disunity is beneficial for the Deen, then such disunity is the objective.

QUR'AN, THE SEPARATOR, UNITES OR DISUNITES

One of the titles of the Qur'aan is Al-Furqaan (The Separator/The Distinguisher). From this title it is clear that the Qur'aan does not always unite. Sometimes it unites and sometimes it disunites. The command is to unite with the People of Haqq and to dissociate from the people of Baatil.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNITY CAN ALSO BE FASAAD

Transgressing the limits of the Shariah is termed fasaad (anarchy). This condition is not restricted to disunity. Sometimes the consequence of unity is also fasaad. Such unity is also reprehensible.

COMPROMISING BAATIL – THE WORST TYPE OF UNITY

If unity is achieved on the basis of disunity with Allah Ta'aala. i.e. to unite in sin, then such unity is the worst unity. Opposing such a unity and disuniting from it is praiseworthy.

Always establish unity on the basis of the limits of Deen. The unity will then become solid, Insha-Allah. This unity will remain as long as Taqwa prevails. Taqwa creates fear of Allah and the concern for fulfilling the rights of others. When the rights of others are observed, unity will be perpetuated. When the rights of others are violated, the consequence is disunity.

WHEELING/FLATTERING UNDER THE GUISE OF UNITY

Nowadays, wheeling/flattery is called unity. Unity at any cost is not praiseworthy nor is it the objective. In fact, sometimes disunity is the objective when unity is detrimental to the Deen.

Unity is valid in obedience to the Shariah. Disunity is the consequence of acting in contravention of the Shariah.

THE EFFECT OF TAQWA

Maulana Muhammad Qaasim Naanotwi (rahmatullah alayh) did not acquire more academic knowledge than his contemporaries. It will in fact be appropriate to say that he had studied less than them. However, the ocean of his knowledge has watered the entire Hindustan. Even now, any Taalib-e-Ilm (student of the Deen) may experiment by means of adopting Taqwa and see how much knowledge is gained. There is no limit in acquisition if Taqwa is cultivated with ikhlaas (sincerity).

THE BARKAT OF INAABAT ILALLAH (TURNING TO ALLAH)

Hadrath Haaji Imdaadullah (rahmatullah alayh) –who was Hadrath Thanvi’s Shaikh – said: “Allah Ta’ala has bestowed to me Sharah Sadr (expansion of the spiritual breast, i.e. complete comprehension with the effect of conviction) in four Masaa-il, which precluded the slightest vestige of doubt: the Mas’alah of Taqdeer, the Mas’alah of the reality of the Rooh, The Mas’alah of the mutual disputes of the Sahaabah, and the Mas’alah of Wahdatul Wujood.”

It is quite obvious that such Sharah Sadr is not the effect of academic research. It is the effect of Inaabat Ilallaah, and the concern to gain this Inaabat.

ALLAH RAISES THE NAMES OF THE AHLULLAH WHILE BURYING THEIR DETRACTORS

Some villains abused the Ahlullah [pious servants of Allah] and wished to discredit them. They [the villains] had faeces thrown on their [the Ahlullah’s] graves. But their names and their spiritual effulgence are still shining and dazzling whilst those villains have become unknown and assigned to oblivion. No one knows their names now and there is no trace of their graves. The resting places of the Ahlullah on the other hand are up to today frequently visited.

It is furthermore observed that the Ahlullah desire obliteration, nonexistence and obscurity whilst shallow Ulama resort to all tricks in the book for self-aggrandizement and popularity. But the Ahlullah, that is the true Ulama shine out whilst the popularity of the shallow Ulama remains for a short time, only to be lost in the bowels of the earth.

Some writers never even wrote their names in their works. But their kitaabs are accepted and widely-circulated. Shallow Ulama on the other hand extravagantly display their names, but their books are assigned to archives.

DESIRE TO BE UNKNOWN

Serve the Ummah and guard the Deen. Do not be concerned with fame. The attitude (of the sincere devotee) should be the desire to be unknown on earth, and even after death people should not become aware of your deeds of service.

TRUE ULAMA DESIRE ANONYMITY

* True Ulama desire to remain anonymous and think of themselves to be worthless; adopting all ways towards this end. But Allah Ta'ala places them on the centre stage.

Hazrat Moulana Muhammad Qaasim Saheb's (Rahmatullahi alaihi) external appearance and dress were such that no one would think him to be an Aalim. Neither would he don a robe and gown and nor would he wear fine and exquisite garments. His dress was of coarse and thick fabric. With such dressing he would attend huge gatherings. But in front of him all robe and gown-clothed Ulama would take a back seat. The name of Moulana Muhammad Qaasim Saheb would flash brightly, whilst people would not even ask who were the others.

The Shahjahanpur Debate saw a majestic confrontation between Islam and the opponents of Islam. Among the partaking Ulama of Islam were those who were dressed in fine robes and gowns. Hazrat Moulana [Qaasim Saheb] was clad in his usual kurta and lungi. But when he commenced his speech the audience was so captivated that the Hindus of Shahjahanpur confessed: "The blue lungi Molvi won. His speech was like a river in full flood. No one could respond to any of his points.

* It was the habit of Moulana [Qaasim Saheb Nanotwi] that he would prefer to remain anonymous in his travels. He would even forbid his associates to divulge his name. If someone had to ask him what his name was, he would reply: "Khurshid Husain". His name from his date of birth read 'Khurshid Husain'. [In other words, the numbers of his date of birth represented, as letters, the words 'Khurshid Husain'. This is called the Abjad count and such a name is referred to as Taareekhī Naam which literally means 'historical name'.] However, he was not known with this name and hence no one would realize that this was Moulana Muhammad Qaasim Saheb.

And if someone had to enquire about his hometown, he would reply: "Ilahabad". He would not take the name of Nanota. Some associates would say: "Hazrat! How is Ilahabad your hometown?" In other words, it was fictitious. He would reply: "Nanota is also a town populated by Allah. Thus, literally every town is Ilahabad." In other words, this is not fictitious; it is open to two interpretations.

Regardless of such care to conceal himself he, still, would not remain hidden. Allah Ta'ala would make him shine out. The honour of the illustrious Ahlullah is so great that they are not in need of external paraphernalia of fame and glory. External paraphernalia are adopted by those who do not have true glory. They resort to external means and agencies to get name and fame.

ISTIGHNAA (INDEPENDENCE), AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY OF THE TRUE ULAMA

The Ulama should be independent and inebriated by their poverty. They should never cast a gaze on the wealth of worldly-minded people. This is not make-believe. The Ahlullah, as a matter of fact, have demonstrated this.

A king went to visit a Buzrug. He reached the door of the Khaanqah [the sanctuary and retreat of the Awliya of Allah]. Here the doorkeeper prevented him from entering pending permission

from the Shaikh. The king was deeply offended by this action of the doorkeeper, but chose silence as he had come with some honour in his heart for the Buzrug.

The doorkeeper informed the Shaikh that His Majesty, the King wished to meet the Shaikh. Permission was granted. The king was all heated up. Immediately upon entering he said: "There shouldn't be a doorkeeper at the door of the Awliya!" The Buzrug spontaneously responded: "There should be, to keep out the dogs of the dunya."

NIYYAT WHEN ADOPTING ISTIGHNAA

The people of Ilm (Ulama and the Students of Deeni Knowledge) should cultivate the attribute of istighnaa (independence). Disgrace is in presenting one's needs (to the wealthy). There is no disgrace in old and torn garments. When adopting istighnaa, the niyyat should be to maintain the honour and dignity of the Deen. By this niyyat, one will gain thawaab while at the same time refrain from going to the rich (for one's needs). There is no disgrace in visiting the poor.

GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISTIGHNAA (INDEPENDENCE) AND KIBR

There is a great difference between istighnaa (independence) and kibr (pride). Kibr is evil while istighnaa is praiseworthy. But an excess of istighnaa too is reprehensible. However, ghulu fil istighnaa (i.e. excessive independence) when dealing with arrogant and proud persons is honourable. And, the best attitude is khulu (i.e. to divert one's attention from all).

ISTIGHNAA OF OUR FORMER MASHAA-IKH

1. Our former Mashaaikh had passed their lives in dire straits of poverty and hardship. They had adopted their poverty to conform with the poverty of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). It was a voluntary, self-imposed poverty. If they had desired, they could have accumulated abundant wealth. But they never even considered it. Whatever they would receive would be contributed in the Path of Allah Ta'ala.

Hadhrat Maulana Qaasim Nanotwi (rahmatullah alayh) possessed only two sets of clothes. One set he donned while the other set was being washed. But the Mashaaikh of today live like nawaabs (rulers/kings). Even if they adopt Istighnaa', it is not as the lofty degree of Istighnaa' of our former Mashaaikh who had lived with Istighnaa' despite their poverty and hardship. There is an incumbent need for Istighnaa'. (Istighnaa' means independence – to be independent of others. The gaze should not be on the wealth of others nor should one expect any aid/gift from others.)

2. The ruler of Rampur, Nawaab Kalb Ali Khaan invited Maulana Qaasim Nanotwi (rahmatullah alayh) on the occasion when he (Maulana Nanotwi) visited Rampur. Hadhrat Nanotwi sent the reply: "I am a villager. I am not aware of the respects and etiquettes to be observed for royalty. My presence will therefore annoy you." The Nawaab sent the following reply: "We ourselves shall honour you. You are not expected to honour us. Do come. I have a great desire to meet you." Hadhrat Nanotwi sent the following response: "Subhaanallah! You have the desire, but I

have to come! Make dua that I develop the desire to meet you. When this desire develops in me, I shall come to meet you.”

3. Once Jahangeer (the mughal king) came to meet Sheikh Saleem Chishti rehmatullahi alayh. (At that time) Sheikh had given his rags to one of his Mureed to look for lice. During this time Sheikh went into his quarters and closed the doors. After a while (when Jahangeer came) the mureed servant knocked on the door. Sheikh asked “What happened?” The mureed said “The King (Jahangeer) is here.” Sheikh said, “Laa Hawla Wa laa Quwaata, I thought some big lice came out, that you came running to show me.”

THE HARMS OF ASSOCIATION WITH THE WEALTHY

Loopholes are extracted generally (by the Ulama) for the wealthy. It is precisely for this reason that the Hadith severely criticizes and reprimands an Aalim who crawls into the company of the wealthy. The effect of such association is inhibition to proclaim the (Haq) of the Masaail (the laws of the Shariah).

Since there is the fear of the cessation of monetary and material provisions (which the wealthy present), the Aalim refrains from stating the truth. He does not speak with clarity. Instead, if the wealthy ask about unlawful acts, this Aalim makes these acts permissible by way of interpretation. Indeed, the condition of those Ulama who freely associate with the wealthy (and the rulers), is extremely deplorable.

Since greed is generally dominant in people, it constitutes an impediment for the proclamation of the Haqq. In addition to harming the Deen, these Ulama themselves suffer adversely in the world. The very wealthy people with whom they associate begin to despise them. They understand that these Ulama present ‘fatwas’ for their appeasement. Never should the Ulama flatter the wealthy.

ADOPT EXTREME CAUTION WHEN DEALING WITH THE WEALTHY

The Ulama should exercise extreme caution when accepting wealth from people. Nowadays this is not heeded at all. Many errors are committed in this regard. The harmful effects of laxitude in this matter brings disgrace to the Deen. If the Ulama themselves make a personal appeal for funds to the rich, then regardless of the sincerity of the contributors, they at times gain the impression that they (the Ulama) have a personal motive for soliciting contributions.

In order to maintain the honour of the Deen, I do not of my own accord cultivate a relationship with the wealthy. However, if they themselves are desirous of fostering a bond, then I am not averse to it. Hadhrat Haaji Saheb (Hadhrat Imdaadullah — rahmatullah alayh) would often say: “When a wealthy man comes to you on account of the Deen, then he is not merely an ameer (a wealthy man of the world). He is then ‘Ni’mal Ameer’ (A noble Ameer). Such a man should not be rebuffed on the assumption that he is a man of the dunya. However, the Ulama should not of their own accord visit the rich on account of their wealth (and worldly positions).

EXISTENCE OF MADAARIS IS A CAUSE FOR BARKAT AND VIRTUE

The existence of Madaris is a cause for abundance of virtue and barkat. In this regard a story narrated by Shaikh Sa'di (rahmatullah alayhi) comes to mind. While a prince was once hunting, a diamond inset in his crown was lost. Darkness had already set in. He ordered his servants to gather all the pebbles in the vicinity and take them along. The diamond will then be searched for among the pebbles at leisure. Similarly, out of these Madaris emerge such persons who undertake and execute all the affairs of the Deen.

THERE IS NO BETTER OCCUPATION THAN SEEKING DEENI KNOWLEDGE

Nowadays there is no better profession than the occupation of Deeni knowledge. There is no better service than this for those to whom Allah Ta'ala has granted Deeni knowledge. There is a great need for this knowledge today. Its virtues are numerous. Perhaps no other activity has so many virtues. As long as the teaching of Deeni knowledge continues, the thawaab of it will also continue until Qiyaamah.

ABUNDANCE OF MADRASAS SHOULD BE WELCOMED

The Masjid is Daarul Amal (the abode of practice) while the Madrasah is Daarul Ilm (the abode of knowledge). Just as there is no harm in the presence of many Musajids, so too should there be nothing wrong with the abundance of Madaris. But ill-feeling develops with the establishment of new Madaris. This should never be so. On the contrary one should become pleased because of the increase of Deeni workers. However, in view of Nafsaani diseases, illfeeling develops when a new madrasah is established.

HANDING OVER WORK TO SOMEBODY ELSE – THE SIGN OF IKHLAAS

The sign of ikhlaas is that if another qualified person arrives on the scene, then you will hand over the Deeni activity to him. However, nowadays the condition is such that if another Madrasah opens up nearby, the concern is to uproot it despite the good work of the new Madrasah. The first Madrasah perceives a reduction in worldly benefit as a consequence of the new Madrasah.

DO ONLY WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO DO WITHIN YOUR MEANS

(Advising a principal of a Madrasah, Hadhrat Thanvi said): Render service to the extent of your ability. If the funds are depleted and all the mudarriseen (teachers) abandon their posts, then teach a few students at your home. This is within the scope of your ability. Do not fix any target for yourself. The objective of Deeni service is the Ridha (Pleasure) of Allah Ta'ala, and this (i.e. the acquisition of Allah's Pleasure) is not reliant on factors beyond one's volitional control. Always remember this principle. Acts which are within your ability should be adopted provided they are not futile. Never contemplate doing what is beyond your ability. If you conduct your life in this manner, both your Deen and dunya will be rectified. Such a person will not be the victim of worry and frustration. His heart will be attached to Allah Ta'ala. Peace of mind is a great treasure. Furthermore, only worry which is self-induced is harmful. Worry which comes of its own accord is not harmful. On the contrary it is beneficial.

CORRUPTION OF FUND-RAISING

Nowadays many irregularities accompany fund-raising for the Madaaris. The worst corruption is the erosion of the dignity of the Ulama who collect funds, and this constitutes poison for the generality of the people. Furthermore, those who collect funds are generally not careful. They adopt such methods of fund-raising which embarrass contributors who feel pressurized to give something. This ruins Ikhlaas (sincerity). It is not permissible to even accept such contributions (which are extracted by the application of indirect pressure).

It is therefore best not to solicit funds from particular persons. The community in general should be addressed (and informed of the needs). It will be permissible to solicit funds from a particular person only if the fund-raiser is one without a high reputation. In this case it is easy for a person to refuse if he is not inclined to contribute.

FUND-RAISING/COLLECTIONS NOWADAYS ARE DETESTABLE

I detest that Ulama even mention the word fund-raising/collection. People slander the Ulama. They labour under the notion that the Ulama have established Madrasahs as a source of livelihood. Never venture at their doorstep for collecting funds. Do service for the Deen within the bounds of your ability. If funds are not forthcoming, let it be so. If our hearts become reformed, we shall be able to render service of the Deen as the Salaf-e-Saaliheen used to do. They were never in need of mansions. An Aalim should impart knowledge (i.e. dars and tadrees) from his home (if he lacks the means for operating a conventional Madrasah). While I am not advocating closure of the Madaaris, I emphasize that they (the Madrasah authorities) should not exceed moderation (in building and other Madrasah expenditure). Madrasah are ventures of great virtue. But in every venture moderation must be rigidly observed.

TODAY GIFTS/DONATIONS ARE ACCOMPANIED BY CORRUPTION

Nowadays gifts and donations are necessarily accompanied by some corruption. If the Ulama prevent their tongues from soliciting funds, Allah Ta'ala will have the means delivered in ways which baffle the mind. Will Allah Ta'ala forget the Ulama if they truly engage in His services?

The attribute of independence should be cultivated only for the sake of Allah Ta'ala. The world will then come forward itself. Stretch your hands to beg from only Allah Ta'ala, not to anyone else. The Ulama have abandoned this way (of independence), hence there is no effect in their words. Keep the gaze focussed on only Allah Ta'ala. He will ensure the accomplishment of His works.

Repose trust on only Allah Ta'ala. Insha'Allah, there will be no starvation. Be active in the service of the Deen. The service itself attracts people. But the intention should never be to attract people. Embark on only such service which you are able to manage yourself. If there are no funds, never be perturbed. If our hearts become reformed, we shall emulate the ways of the Self-e-Saaliheen in rendering service to the Deen. They had no need for big structures to execute service for Allah Ta'ala. Every Aalim would teach at his home.

While I am not advocating the suspension of the Madaaris, I emphasise the observance of the limits. (In other words, the Ulama should not disgrace themselves by hankering after the wealth of people even if it is for Deeni causes.) I take oath by Allah and say: If the Ulama execute their duties with sincerity, people will of their own accord come forward to assist.

If due to lack of funds the Madrasah has to close down, let it close down. I say to the Ulama: In such a state, sit at home, work and earn your living. If someone comes for lessons, teach him.

If there is no food, rather die in a corner of your home, but do not stretch your hands to others. on the Day of Qiyaamah, tell Allah Ta'ala: 'I have done whatever was in my power. For doing more, funds were needed, but which I lacked. Those who had funds had refused to give.' At that time, the necks of people will hang in shame and fear.

What is the aim of service (of the Deen)? It is the radha (pleasure) of Allah. When there were the means to render service to 100 students, this was done. Now (due to lack of funds) if there is only means to accommodate and teach five students, the thawaab is the same, and along with this the burden is lightened.

Even if the collection of funds is for a noble Deeni purpose, then too it involves some disgrace. This to me is evil. The common evil is that it is a disgrace to the Deen. As for the Ulama, their asking for funds brings disgrace to them, and within a short while all shame is eliminated. Such Ulama become denuded of the effects of Ilm.

SIGHT SHOULD BE ON RIDHA OF ALLAH, NOT CONTINUANCE OF MADRASAH

Corruption in fund-raising schemes have increased to such an extent that the path of truth has been abandoned and the ways of falsehood have been acquired. Nowadays the authorities of religious institutions regard the contributors as gods. They have become subservient to those who contribute funds. They do not differentiate between halal and haram. The existence of a Madrasah is meaningless if the pleasure of Allah and His Rasool is not acquired. In some cases it is better for a Madrasah to cease operation. In most cases, the management is more concerned with retaining the pleasure of the wealth even at the cost of Allah's displeasure. Care is taken to avoid affronting donors even if Allah's laws are violated in the process. It is quite apparent from the attitude of the officials and management boards (of religious institutions) that the aim is to achieve name and fame. They seek fulfillment of these aims via the Madrasha under their control.

Since the purpose of a Madrasha is the dissemination of the Deen and the acquisition of the pleasure of Allah and His Rasool, these ends should always be kept in view. Haqq (truth) is dominant. It has been said: "Haqq will remain dominant and will not be dominated." Resolve to maintain this work (of the Madrasah) as long as its activities are confined to the limits of the Shari'ah. The day these limits are transgressed, withdraw from the Madrasah, for then, the actual aim, viz. Allah's pleasure, no longer exists. Hazrat Maulana Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi) once wrote to Maulana Khalil Ahmed (rahmatullah alayhi) that Maulana Deobandi (rahmatullah

alayhi) when they were being distressed by opponents: “My Beloved Brethren! Why are you distressed? The goal is not the Madrasah. The goal is the pleasure of Allah Jalle Shanuhu. There are many ways of attaining this goal. One such way is the Madrasah. If the Madrasah remains with you, continue rendering your services. If it does not remain, find an alternate avenue for your services.”

WASTE IN FUND-RAISING FUNCTIONS

There was a jalsah (function) in Muradabad for raising funds for some Deeni project. My advice is: Close all these functions of waste in which huge sums of money of Muslims are destroyed. Rather contribute this money (which is wasted in organizing the function) to the Deeni project.

MADRASAH FUNDS USED INCORRECTLY

Funds contributed to a Madrasah may not be used to feed guests. This is not permissible. People contribute for the expenses of the Madrasah. Feeding guests is excluded from this expenditure. The principal of the Madrasah is only the Ameen (the Trustee—the one entrusted with the funds) and the wakeel (the agent or representative). He is not the owner of the funds. He may therefore not spend in just any way he wishes.

PROJECTS OF ALLAH NOT DEPENDENT ON FUND-RAISING

Never extract funds by applying pressure on the contributors. The projects of Allah do not come to a standstill. Contributing to a Deeni project is to contribute to Allah Ta’ala. Allah Ta’ala is not in need of anyone. Therefore do not act in conflict with the command of Allah Ta’ala. We are encouraged to contribute because in contributing there is benefit for ourselves. Sadqaat increase wealth in this world and in the Aakhirah treasures are accumulated for us. The projects of Allah are not dependent on anyone’s contribution. Allah’s work will be accomplished. However, by abstaining from contributing, people harm themselves. They deprive themselves of immense rewards and virtues.

UNWARENESS OF THE MEANING OF TAWAKKUL

A man wrote explaining that he had started a Madrasah on the basis of Tawakkul. However, he was unaware of the meaning of Tawakkul. He said that due to lack of funds, a mudarris (teacher) had resigned. The resignation of the mudarris brought great grief to the principal. He was short of one mudarris. Now why does he grieve so much on account of the resignation of the teacher? The reality is that there is a thief lurking in his heart. The desire is to advertise that ‘I am executing this great and noble (Deeni) project’. Therefore, the reduction in the material ways and means causes this grief. Why does one fix a target for one’s activity? Do only what you are able to accomplish –what is within the limits of your ability.

Thus, if due to lack of funds all the mudarriseen (ustaadhs) resign, then sit in your house and teach a couple of students yourself. Do not fix a specific target in your project. The objective of the activity is Ridhaa-e-Haqq (the Pleasure of Allah). The attainment of this objective is not dependent on factors beyond one’s control and ability. This is a principle which should always be remembered. Pursue what is within your power if it is not futile. Never contemplate to acquire

what is not within your ability. If you adopt this principle in all pursuits, both your Deen and dunya will be reformed. Worry will not afflict such a person.

LIGHT WORK AND NO REDUCTION IN THAWAAB

The principal grieved because the Madrasah's activity was curtailed as a result of the resignation of the mudarris. The objective of the project is Allah's Pleasure. There is no reduction in this. When you had the ability to cater for a hundred students, you executed that task. Now you have the ability to cater for only five students. The work has lightened while the thawaab (reward) remains the same. Now why grieve? It is narrated in the Hadith that when a person becomes ill (and is unable to fulfil his usual quota of ibaadat), Allah Ta'ala instructs the Recording Angels: "My servant has become helpless. Continue recording whatever good deeds he used to practise."

Thus, the reward is the same despite the inactivity. If while serving five students, our niyyat is to serve 100 if we are able to do so, we shall reap the reward of serving 100 students. In fact, this is even better because the same thawaab is obtained with lesser headache. Let the work be curtailed if it has to. Your objective will not be curtailed. The curtailment in fact is fine because you will suffer lesser headaches. So why become frustrated when the mudarriseen resign? The hidden reality is the fear of being humiliated (in the eyes of others) if the project is reduced. People will sarcastically comment: "What has happened? You had opened up a big Madrasah, but now there remains only a shadow of it." This is the calamity besetting people. People have drifted very far from the Tareeq (Path).

EVILS AND CORRUPTIONS OF CUSTOMARY MADRASAH JALSAHS

The summary of the Shar'i prohibitions on this issue are: Reflection and experience testify that there are two primary reasons for organizing these functions (Jalsahs): (1) Fund-raising (2) Advertising the dignity and status of the Madrasah. The motivation for this is hubb-e-jah (love for fame) and hubb-e-maal (love for wealth). Numerous Nusoos (Qur'aanic verses and Hadith narrations) forbid this. If the fame and wealth are intended for the Deen, there is then no objection. However, the question is: Is the motive the Deen or the dunya?

Although linterpretation will be presented (by the Madrasah authorities) claiming that these jalsahs are held for the sake of the Deen, it should be understood that Allah Ta'ala has indicated a standard for every motive. on the basis of this standard can the correctness or corruption of the motive be ascertained. An examination of these jalsahs shows that on these occasions worldly desire is dominant. If truly the motive is the Deen, anything in conflict with Allah's Pleasure would not be countenanced and adopted. When we see that acts which are in conflict with Divine Pleasure prevail at these functions, then it is clear testimony for the conclusion that the motive is the dunya (not the Deen). Some of these acts are as follows:

(1) Exaggerating the status and condition of the Madrasah both overtly and covertly. This is kithb (falsehood) and khidaa' (deception). (2) In order to increase the student population unqualified (unfit) students are portrayed as qualified (fit). (3) Advertsising the accomplishments

(of the Madrasah); self-praise; giving preference to one's activities; lauding one's own activities; displaying that students have attained expertise in the branches of Shar'i knowledge regardless of them having such ability or not. All these are signs of hubb-e-jah and hubb-e-maal. (4) Riya (show) is haraam. Invariably, on such occasions donors contribute with riya. Becoming a way for riya is sinful. (5) Even if a valid objection or criticism of the Madrasah is made, it is refuted. It will never be accepted. on the contrary, the objector is pursued acrimoniously and the objection is rebutted inspite of the heart understanding its validity. (6) If another Madrasah is established (in the proximity), it is viewed with suspicion and enmity even if the new Madrasah's state is good. The wish is for its failure and closure. In reality, the opening of a new Madrasah should be an occasion of happiness because of the multiplication of Deeni activities. However, the existing Madrasah authorities view the new institution with disdain and enmity merely because they feel that the prominence of their institution will wane. (7) In most cases there is extravagance and waste at these jalsahs. Large amounts of money are wasted for bringing people and their retinue to the jalsah. Those whose presence is unnecessary are invited. At times the Madrasah funds the entertainment bill for the food, etc. (8) Noise, rowdiness, worldly conversations, evil poetry and other evils also accompany these gatherings. (9) The rules of the Shariah are not observed when funds are being raised. Indirect pressure is exercised to put prospective donors to shame thus constraining them to contribute."

ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE PAST

In the present age there are two kinds of corruption in the Talaba (Students of Daarul Uloom): Corruption in relation to the quest for Ilm, and corruption in relation to Akhlaaq (Islamic moral character). Comparatively speaking, it can be discerned with great clarity that the difference between Talaba and Asaatizah of this age and those illustrious Mutaqaddimeen Ulama (of bygone times) is like the distance between east and west.

The enthusiasm for the quest of Ilm in those noble beings was such that they would undertake difficult journeys of hundreds of miles to gain the knowledge of one Hadith. They underwent extreme hardship in the mission to investigate even a single narrator of Hadith. If, inspite of all the hardship they did not attain the goal, they would not abandon the quest.

They spent nights investigating, researching and studying a single mas'alah, and they would fully engross their brains to unravel and understand every line (of their lessons). Volumes have been compiled on their selfless sacrifices in their true quest for the acquisition of Knowledge (of the Deen).

Their material state was such that they were without text books. They could not afford oil for the lamp. They had no sponsor to assume responsibility for the necessary expenses of their studies (food, clothing, etc.). They passed their days in hunger but diligently pursued the Path in the quest of Ilm. I heard from reliable authorities that there were 22 Talaba (Students) in the Bukhaari Sharief class of Hadhrat Maulana Shah Muhammad Ishaaq (rahmatullah alayh), but they had only one copy of Bukhaari Sharief. To acquire the jewels of Ilm they dived deep into

the ocean of talab (search). If the episodes of their search have to be narrated to present-day Talaba, it will not be surprising if they refute these as being far-fetched.

Everyone can testify to the wonderful fruit which their efforts had realized. They attained mastery and perfection in every branch of knowledge. In fact, they transported Tafseer-e-Hadith, Usool-e-Fiqh, Ma'aani, Tasawwuf, Nahw and Sarf— in short, every branch of Ilm — to realms beyond the limits of perfection. Truly, if they had not struggled and sacrificed so much in the quest of Ilm and in its formulation, today the world would have been dark with the zulmat (darkness) of jahl (ignorance).

ALL THE MEANS AVAILABLE TODAY, YET NO RESULTS

Today, we have all the means and comforts for acquiring Ilm — affectionate Asaatizah, beautifully printed text books, exhaustive commentaries, elaborate boarding and lodging facilities. Everything has been made available for our comfort and ease. All means for the acquisition of Ilm have been presented to us. In spite of this, the Talaba are not concerned with their kitaabs nor have they any affection and respect for the Asaatizah. They are bereft of eagerness nor do they have any enthusiasm for the quest of Ilm. Neither do they fulfil the rights of mutaala'ah nor takraar. They are devoid of the hue of Ilm. The kitaabs will be completed and the Turban of qualification will adorn their heads while they are unable to write properly nor read the ibaaat (Arabic text) correctly except for a few.

The consequences of this inability and incompetency are glaring. It is observed that when such incompetent Talaba issue from our Madaaris, they simply lack in ability. They have no ability to teach. They have no methodology in Ifta. Such incompetent ones either make lecturing their profession in which they also commit blunders, or they become Imaams of some Musajjid. If they have to take to teaching, they have to resign in humiliation.

In view of such results, the public due to little understanding, concludes that the aim of pursuing Knowledge of the Deen is merely lecturing and imamate of the Musajjid to earn a livelihood. They therefore resolve to keep their sons away from the pursuit of Ilm-e-Deen. However, due to their inability to understand the reality, they fail to grasp that the lamentable plight of incompetent Talaba is not the consequence of Ilm (Deeni Knowledge). On the contrary, it is the lack of resolve of the Talaba.

KNOWLEDGE DOES NOT MEAN ABILITY TO SPEAK

Most of those called 'Allamah' nowadays have no affinity with Ilm (knowledge of the Deen). However, they are able to deliver concocted lectures. He (i.e. the lecturer) deems himself to be an Allamah. Lecturing is not the end or goal of knowledge. Knowledge is something else. The introductory stages of Ilm have been understood as being the goals (Maqaasid) of Ilm. This is in fact Jahaalat (ignorance). If language is knowledge, then the Bedouins will be great Ulama. (Proficiency in speaking the Arabic language and the ability to lecture do not make a man an Aalim).

REFRAINING FROM GIVING LECTURES UNTIL THE NAFS HAS BEEN SUBJUGATED

Imaam Ghazaali (rahmatullah alayh) has written in one of his kitaabs that the novice in Sulook (the Path of moral reformation –Tasawwuf) should refrain from giving lectures. In the initial stage the nafs has not yet been perfectly adorned with the moral attributes of excellence (Akhlaaq-e-Hameedah), hence there is always the probability of pride and vanity corrupting the nafs. This opinion is substantiated by the Qur'aanic aayat: "Forgive and overlook until Allah issues His command." This aayat was revealed in Makkah to prohibit the Sahaabah from waging Jihaad against the kuffaar. The reason for this prohibition was that the Sahaabah were new converts to Islam. They had not as yet achieved perfect adornment of the nafs with Akhlaaqe- Hameedah. There existed the possibility of nafsani contamination in Jihaad.

The reason for the prohibition was not numerical inferiority. Numerical inferiority never constituted an impediment for Muslims. In fact, 60 had confronted an army of 60,000, and they were victorious. When the Madani era dawned, most of the Sahaabah had attained perfection in moral reformation. The small minority (those who had not yet attained perfection) was under the domination of the majority. Thus, the aayat granting permission for Jihaad was revealed: "Permission (to wage Jihaad) has been granted to those who are being persecuted because verily they have been oppressed."

ANYTHING POSSIBLE WHEN NUSRAT (AID) OF ALLAH IS DESERVED

On the occasion of the Battle of Yarmuk, Hadhrat Khalid Bin Walid (radhiyallahu anhu) selected 30 Sahaabah to confront Jablah Bin Aim who was at the head of an army of sixty thousand soldiers. Hadhrat Abu Ubaidah (radhiyallahu anhu) commented: "Do you want to destroy the Muslims?" Hadhrat Khalid Bin Walid (radhiyallahu anhu) said: "No! I have selected such men who are the equivalent of 60,000." But Hadhrat Abu Ubaidah (radhiyallahu anhu) was not satisfied. Hence, another 30 Sahaabah were selected. The sixty Sahaabah went into battle against Jablah and his army. The battle raged fiercely all day long. Finally, the army of Jablah fled from the battlefield in defeat. (This was the Nusrat of Allah Ta'ala with the Sahaabah.)

THE PURPOSE OF WA'Z (LECTURE)

(Introduction: The Ahl-e-Bid'ah – those who practise bid'ah- in India accuse the Ulama of Deoband of being disrespectful to Rasulullah- sallallahu alayhi wasallam – Such accusations and slander have been evoked in consequence of the criticism of bid'ah customs such as meelaad and qabar-puja –grave worship- by the Ulama of Deoband. Since the Ulama of Deoband prohibit all acts and customs of bid'ah, the Bareilli sect propagated the slander that the Ulama of Deoband are disrespectful of Rasulullah – sallallahu alayhi wasallam. In view of this false propaganda, the Ulama at Darul Uloom Deoband asked Hakimul Ummat, Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thaarvi- rahmatullah alayh- to deliver a wa'z on the fadhaa-il of Nabi-e-Kareem- sallallahu alayhi wasallam- to counter the false propaganda.—Mujlisul Ulama)

Commenting on this request, Hadhrat said: "During the Jalsah of Deoband (Darul Uloom Deoband), I was requested to deliver a wa'z on the fadhaail (virtues) of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) so that the ill-conceived notion of the masses regarding the Ulama of Deoband

could be dispelled. The opponents (of the Ulama of Deoband) had deceived the people into believing that the Ulama of Deoband vilify the lofty status of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) – Nauthubillaah! I said to them (i.e. those who requested the wa’z): Such a discourse will only serve the motive of the speaker. A wa’z should in reality be for the benefit of the audience. Since no one present here (in the jalsah) denies the virtues of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), of what benefit will such a wa’z be for them?

After some thought, I delivered a wa’z on the malady of Hubb-e-Dunya (love of the world) which is a widely prevalent disease among the people. If I had delivered a wa’z on the virtues of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), then perhaps the misconception may have been dispelled. But this misconception which (countenances slander against the Ulama of Deoband) is not such a grave malady to warrant a special lecture). It is neither kufr nor shirk. While it is incumbent to believe in the Nabi, it is not incumbent to believe in any particular Aalim or Wali. Just as Allah Ta’ala will forgive other sins, so too will He forgive this misconception (of the Ahl-e-Bid’ah). This forgiveness will be even if their niyyat (intention) was malicious. On the contrary, if their intention is sincere and their accusation is the product of a genuine intellectual error of judgement, then instead of being punished, they will be rewarded.”

IMPORTANCE OF DECLARING IGNORANCE

When you have no clarity and certitude on a question, respond without ambiguity that you are not aware of the answer. There is no need to answer every question. In fact, saying: ‘I do not know’, is also an answer. But people have the idea that it is incumbent to reply to every question whether the answer is known or not. This is not permissible. As long as you do not have clarity and certainty, do not answer.

NO GREATER IGNORANCE THAN IGNORANCE OF ONE’S OWN IGNORANCE

To lack awareness of our own ignorance is also ignorance. Sometimes the Ustaadh (teacher) is aware of his ignorance (on a particular issue). He is cognizant of the fact that he does not understand a certain issue (in the text book) and that his explanation is incorrect. However, people have developed the habit of projection and silencing others. The aim is to silence the students. But all students are not alike. Some are extremely intelligent and discerning. They understand that now the Ustaadh is simply displaying eloquence of words. As a result of this attitude, the lofty rank of the Ustaadh is diminished. This attitude (adopted by some Ustaadhs) is considered proper irrespective of the problem remaining unsolved. This attitude of the Ustaadh is contagious. The students too acquire it. They too react similarly with their students throughout their lives. Alas! What a grave sin! The Qur’aan which contains prohibitions also contains the aayat: “I am not among the pretenders”.

CRITICISM ALSO A FAVOUR

I consider critics and their criticism to be also ni’mat (favours) of Allah. Even after spending considerable sums of money one does not acquire what the critics offer free although there intentions may not be sincere. Nevertheless, at least I am apprized of my errors, permitting me

to rectify them. I am grateful to Allah Ta'ala for extracting from opponents something which sometimes even friends are unable to offer.

AN AALIM WHO IS OBESE ON ACCOUNT OF INDULGENCE

Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "Verily, Allah Ta'ala abhors an obese Aalim." An Aalim whose obesity is on account of indulgence in the world and forgetfulness of the Akhirah is hated by Allah Ta'ala.

RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY TO AID THOSE ENGAGED IN DEENI SERVICE

Those persons (Ulama) who have dedicated their lives to the Deen and are fully engrossed in Deeni service, if they pursue an occupation to earn their living, the Deeni service will be severely curtailed. It is permissible, in fact meritorious, for such persons to refrain from earning. It is the incumbent responsibility of the community to see to their needs.

WORLDLY GAIN THROUGH DEEN IS WORSE

"Acquisition of the world (wealth and fame) in worldly garb is not as harmful as the acquisition of the world in Deeni garb." (Pursuing worldly gain in the name of the Deen is spiritually destructive. According to the Hadith, one of the signs of Qiyaamah is the pursuit of the mundane objectives by means of deeds of the Akhirah. Acts of ibaadat will be used as a screen to fulfill worldly and nafsani desires. The Ulama of this age are generally the fulfillment of this prediction of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam).)

BOOKS OF OPPONENTS SHOULD NOT BE STUDIED

The books of opponents should not be studied even with the intention of debating and refuting them. If a wrestler desires to wrestle with a person, he should first ascertain whether the opponent is weaker or stronger than him. If he is weaker, then wrestle him. If stronger, stay far from him. A more powerful man should wrestle with him. It is improper for one who is not an expert to attempt a refutation of opponents. Besides a Muhaqqiq (expert) no one should venture to embark on a refutation of opponents (deviates) because of the danger of falling into doubt (due to lack of adequate knowledge and expertise).

FUTILITY OF WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

I am opposed to the system of written examinations which is prevalent in educational institutes. Great strain and stress are imposed on students by this system. The purpose of examinations is to ascertain the ability of the student. It will therefore, suffice to ascertain whether the student has understood the kitab which he has been taught. This fact can be ascertained even if the student is tested orally and the kitab given to him to look at. Memorising can be accomplished by the revision and teaching. In fact, in most cases, the student forgets what he had memorized during the student days. Such futile memorising strains the mind unnecessarily. It is sufficient to ascertain if the student possesses the ability to solve the problems in the kitabs by means of his own research. More than this is an exercise in futility.

WAY TO ACQUIRE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

*Understanding (Tafaquh) in the Deen is acquired by one who has pursued Knowledge (of the Deen) with attention, and who had honoured his Asaatizah (Teachers). The student who displeases his Asaatizah will never gain true Ilm regardless of his efforts. Experience has confirmed this.

*Fahm-e-Saleem (healthy intelligence) and Tafaquh fid Deen (the ability to ponder in the Deen) are attained by such Students who had studied with attention and who had retained the pleasure of their Asaatizah. A student who had merely made effort without keeping his Asaatizah happy never acquires true Ilm (of the Deen).

SALAF'S FOCUS WAS ON PRACTICAL BENEFIT, NOT JUST ACADEMIC DISCOURSES
The Salf-e-Saaliheen did not restrict themselves to academic discourses. They would derive practical benefit from the Qur'aan and Ahaadith. On the other hand, those of later times indulged more in academic exposition of theories. For example, according to the Hadith, Allah Ta'ala descends to the first heaven in the last portion of the night. On the basis of this Hadith the Salf-e-Saaliheen engaged more in worship during this time of the night. They did not indulge in theoretical discussion regarding this Hadith. They were not concerned with the manner of Divine Descent. They did not ask: 'Since Allah is not a physical body, how does he descend?' They were not concerned with theories and abstract arguments.

FOCUS ON MADRASAH STUDIES

During my student days I requested Hadhrat Maulana Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi) to become bay't. Hadhrat Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi) responded: "As long as you are involved in the acquisition of academic knowledge (i.e. Deeni knowledge), consider this to be a waswasah (whisper) of Shaitan." Undoubtedly, these illustrious men of the Deen were truly wise men. Indeed this advice was wonderful. However, at the time I did not understand this statement. I thought Hadhrat Haji Imdadullah (rahmatullah alayhi) requesting him to intercede on my behalf. I wrote: "Request Hadhrat Maulana to accept me in his bay't."

Maulana Hadhrat Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi) was proceeding that year for Hajj. I schemed to send this letter of intercession with him to hand to Haji Imdadullah (rahmatullah alayhi). Of course, Hadhrat Gangohi was not aware of the contents of the letter. (Haji Imdadullah was at the time in Makkah Muazzamah).

Hadhrat Haji Saheb (rahmatullah alayhi) replied my letter. He had the reply written by Hadhrat Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi). In his reply he said that he (Haji Imdadullah) had accepted me into his bay't. He also wrote that after completing my studies if I wished to practise shaghl (special devotional exercises), I should refer to Maulana Muhammad Ya'qub (rahmatullah alayhi) or to Maulana Gangohi (rahmatullah alayhi). In conclusion he instructed that I should never abandon the service of knowledge.

RESPECT FOR MASHA-IKH MORE IMPORTANT THAN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Of greater importance than academic research is adab (respect and honour) for the Salaf-e-Saaliheen. By virtue of adab Allah Ta'ala bestows the ability of research also. There is error, misunderstanding and great danger in such research which sets aside the adab of the Salaf-e-Saaliheen.

KNOWLEDGE IS DISGRACED DUE TO EVIL ATTRIBUTES OF ULAMA

When the people observe evil attributes in the Ulama, then there is no effect in their talk nor do the people respect their knowledge. Together with them (the Ulama), knowledge is then also disgraced.

MOLVIS INCLINING TOWARDS SECULARISM

Nowadays the influence of secularism is so strong that even a Molvi prefers secular studies for his children. It comes in the hadith: "The love of the world is the root of all evil". This hubb (love) has corrupted all people whether Aalim or Jaahil. In whomsoever exists this malady, he will be corrupt. The worldly man who is devoid of this ailment will be saved from its evil and corruption. (But the Aalim suffering from this malady will be ruined).

REMAINING IDLE IN MADRASAH IS BETTER THAN SECULAR STUDIES

I shall now turn my attention to the general public and say that even if we concede that this lamentable state is the product of Ilm, nevertheless, I claim with great emphasis and vociferously state that inspite of the poor quality of Ilm acquired nowadays, inspite of the shallowness of knowledge acquired, inspite of the lack of ability and competency, whether ability is gained or not, in fact, I shall expand on this and say that even if a student wastes his time in a Deeni Madrasah, it is infinitely superior than the pursuit of secular education (especially in the immoral institutions of this age). It is millions of times better to remain idle in a Deeni Madrasah than involvement in English (secular) studies which corrupt Aqaaid and Akhlaaq.

Even if excellence and perfection in Ilm are not acquired, at least correctness of Aqaaid will be ensured. Beliefs will not become corrupt. Living at the Madrasah will generate love for the People of the Deen. Even if the end result of studying at a Madrasah is to become a sweeper in a Musjid, it is superior than secular study, It is better than becoming a lawyer and a barrister, etc. and ruining one's Aqaaid thereby shaking the very foundations of Imaan, and being disrespectful to Allah, His Rasool and the Sahaabah. Such evils are generally corollaries of secular education..

This preference, i.e. Deeni Knowledge over secular study, is exceptionally clear to those who love the Deen. Yes, those who have no relationship with the Deen, they will gorge out whatever drivel they wish. Nevertheless, there is the need to rectify and improve the standard of the ability of the Talaba. The consequences of lack of ability are not good. If this corruption (inability) is eliminated, a whole world will be reformed.

MOLVIS AND WESTERN EDUCATION

A Molvi relative of Hadhrat Thanvi (rahmatullah alayh) who was a Waa-iz (lecturer) sent his sons to acquire western education. Hadhrat Thanvi was extremely annoyed and grieved. Despite Hadhrat Thanvi forbidding his relative from this move, he ignored it. Hadhrat then forbade the Molvi from corresponding with him. Hadhrat commented:

“He (the Molvi) accepted this (i.e. severing of the relationship) for the sake of western education. I said to him: Are you not ashamed of yourself delivering wa’z (lectures) while you are sending your children for western education? If you were not a Molvi, I would not have been so considerably displeased. But, you sit on the Mimbar and encourage people towards the Deen yet you send your children for western education!”

TAKFEER FOR MAINTAINING SHAR’I ORDER

Hadhrat Maulana Gangohi said that on the Day of Qiyaamah there will be many who were branded kaafir here, but who will be forgiven, for in reality they were not kaafir. However, for maintaining Shar’i order, if there is a need, then a person may be labelled as a kaafir.

REPLACING A SUNNAT IS NOT REVIVING A SUNNAT

Once Shah Abdul Qadir (rahmatullah alayh) said to Hadhrat Maulana Ismaail Shaheed (rahmatullah alayh) to discontinue Rafa’Yadain (raising the hands repeatedly) during Salaat as his practice would lead to unnecessary fitnah among the masses (who were all Hanafis). Hadhrat Ismaail Shaheed said: ‘If the fitnah of the masses is to be considered, then what would happen to the Hadith, ‘He who adheres to my Sunnah at the time of the corruption of my Ummah, will receive the reward of 100 shuhada (martyrs)’? Hadhrat Shah Abdul Qadir responded: “We were under the impression that Ismaail was an Aalim, but it is clear that he lacks understanding of the Hadith. The Hadith applies to a situation where a (new) act has been introduced in conflict with the Sunnah. But the act we are discussing (viz., abandoning Rafa’Yadain,) is not in conflict with the Sunnah. Irsaal (leaving the hands without raising them) is also a Sunnat act.”

NO CONCESSION IN THE RULING OF SIN, NO MATTER HOW PREVALENT

Nowadays pictures and alcohol have become widely prevalent. (Someone asked: ‘Due to this wide prevalence, will there be any concession in the ruling?’ Hadhrat Maulana Thanvi responded): In matters pertaining to hillat (being halaal) and hurmat (being haraam), Umoom Balwa (wide-scale prevalence) has no validity. Umoom Balwa is valid in najaasat and tahaarat, and that too if there is difference of opinion among the Mujtahideen of the Salaf.